Systemic Lupus Erythematosus and Overlapping “Connective Tissue Diseases”

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SLE: A Complex Inflammatory Disease with Autoimmunity

- Named for the wolf in Latin, lupus often involves the skin – and so much more

- 4 skin & membrane issues
Discoid Rash – deep inflammation
Photosensitivity = rash triggered by sunlight
Mouth or nose ulcers
Sterile serositis = pleuritis or pericarditis or peritonitis

Inflammation of the membranes covering the lungs, heart and abdominal cavity
Arthritis, usually with fluid in joints
Kidney inflammation (nephritis)

- High blood pressure
- Pitting swelling of the legs or whatever is nearest the ground
- Protein and or red blood cells in the urine
- Poor kidney function – rise in serum creatinine
Lupus Nephritis, why a biopsy?
Lupus Cerebritis (brain inflammation)
Hematology disorder

- Low white blood cell counts
- Low hemoglobin due to antibodies that react to your own red blood cells
- Low platelet counts because of antibodies that interfere with platelet survival – can lead to bleeding and bruising
Anti-nuclear antibodies (ANA)

- Pretty much must have high ANA to really have lupus
- If ANA is negative, consider primary antiphospholipid syndrome or fibromyalgia
Immunologic disorder

- High antibodies to double stranded DNA
- High Sm antibodies
- Lupus anticoagulant
- Other antiphospholipid antibodies
- Low complement proteins from consumption (using up the proteins)
Livedo Reticularis with APL
Tricky diagnosis to make

- ANA tests can be abnormal for many reasons: 25-35% of healthy children have ANA above the normal range, and mononucleosis can cause ANAs.
- The most common symptom in SLE is fatigue, and it is the most common symptom in everyone.
- There are lots of rashes in lupus, but most rashes sent to rheumatologists are not due to lupus.
- Many of the symptoms and findings of lupus are either not common enough or not specific enough to help make a diagnosis.
Raynaud Phenomenon
Overlapping Rheumatic Diseases

- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Scleroderma
- Idiopathic inflammatory myositis/myopathies
  - Dermatomyositis
  - Polymyositis
- Sjogren syndrome
  - Dry eyes, mouth, swollen salivary glands, can develop lung disease, some get lymphoma in their 60s and 70s
Scleredema
Raynaud fingertip injury in systemic scleroderma
Dermatomyositis

- Weakness of muscles worse near the trunk
- Rash – shawl distribution
- Muscle enzyme elevations
Treatment

• Individualized by what is going on and how sick the patient is
• Hydroxychloroquine is an “essential vitamin” in lupus
• Prednisone for flares that must be suppressed quickly
• Immune suppressants where needed
• Similar approaches with “overlap syndromes;” it depends on the features
Beware snake oil...
REAL SPECIALITY OF VIETNAM

SNAKE WINE (ONE UNIT)

USAGE: RHEUMATISM, LUMBAGO, SWEAT OF LIMBS

 Dosage: Twice a day each a small cup before meal